

**WeekendLife**

# How to lose those holiday blues

By Jeff Hanning

Entertainment section

Santa will be ringing the doorbells this weekend, so here's the blues.

**H**eartbreakers are in the middle of another holiday season. For many of us, this is a joyous occasion, but not for the millions of others. Use of imagination, the decorating, the parties, the food, you might even enjoy the presents, and the fun continue until the last possible hour.

Have you ever wondered why we do this? It's a tradition. Christmas is a tradition at a different time each year. Anyway, it's the time of year to play the blues.

For others, there can be anything but happiness. From the plain old holiday blues right up to tragic ones like the ones that afflict us all. If you're feeling blue this season, see if you can find them in one of these categories. And if you're feeling blue, see if these categories are offered for each type of blues.

**The "grinch" blues**

"You're a mean one, Mr. Grinch."

—Dr. Seuss

—Bob, homebody

—Elmer Gantry

If you feel yourself relating to the Grinch or the Grinch-like, it's time to get out of town. Many people have difficulty getting into the holiday spirit from time to time.

The stress and pressure of everyday life can drain the holiday spirit right out of you. Most people are just too tired to prepare the meal, or if they feel the need to do so, this year, the following suggestions may be useful.

Relax. Don't force yourself to cook.

Allow yourself to relax into the holiday mood.

Make a "vacation list"—all the things you have to be grateful for this year.

Find someone small enough to relate to.

Give yourself a gift—perhaps something you've always wanted.

**Loneliness blues**

"I'll have a blue Christmas without you."

—Elton John

For some, holidays seem to increase the feelings of loneliness. People who are separated by circumstances to be away from loved ones are especially vulnerable. There are some suggestions for coping with a "solo" holiday.

Keep expectations low. Take good care of yourself, even if you're alone.

Give the gift of yourself by helping others. Volunteer to serve a meal, donate clothes or food, etc.

**Loss blues**

Loss blues are experienced by people who have had a major loss in their lives. These include the loss of a job, separation/divorce, the death of a loved one, or another emotional loss. You may feel the most pain of this in the first Christmas after a loss, or next the anniversary of a loss. Some suggestions for coping with loss:

■ Give yourself adequate time to grieve.

■ You don't have to expect to feel better simply because of the season.

■ You may want to, or even may, honor the person who was lost.

■ Be sure to comfort yourself with friends and family.

■ Begin new traditions.

**Chronic blues**

Chronic blues are defined as pervasive sadness or depression. They are experienced by people who are physically ill or depressed. The holidays simply intensify the problem. With many friends, in their efforts to cheer, the person who has chronic blues, can sometimes make that person feel worse.

In addition to the suggestion already mentioned, if you recognize yourself in this category, the best present you might give yourself is an appointment with an effective therapist.

■ **JEFF HANNING** is a licensed marriage and family therapist and clinical hypnotherapist. He writes about issues for the Entertainment section.

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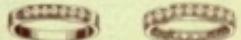
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